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Lewis and Clark Among the Indians

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direct, is another reason why anybody headed for a field experience in a native community should read this book. Getting a sense of what and how the Mesquakies taught McTaggart will help them understand what is in store for them. Such a lesson, indeed, would be good for all of us who come into contact with people of cultures different from our own. But all of this is really frosting on the cake, because *Wolf That I Am* is, quite simply, one of the most enjoyable books I have ever read—it was better this time than the last. I am glad it is in paperback and I hope that everyone who missed it eleven years ago will rush out and buy it now. They will learn a lot and the learning will be fun.

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Lewis and Clark among the Indians, by James P. Ronda. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. xvii, 310 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, appendix, index, maps. $24.95 cloth.

James P. Ronda's *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* is a marvelous book on a subject that many historians might think had been worked to death. After all, how many books on Lewis and Clark are really needed? The intrepid explorers, Sacagawea, and the continental crossing are well known in history, folklore, and myth. *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* may not be the last book about the Corps of Discovery, but it is surely one of the best because Ronda provides a new understanding of the famed expedition.

The book follows the essential chronology of the Lewis and Clark expedition, but Ronda focuses on Indian relations and ethnohistory to reinterpret the journey as an event in frontier history, and to explain its significance in Native American history. Indians were calculated to be a major part of the expedition's concerns from the time that Jefferson conceived it. The president directed Lewis and Clark to collect information about the native people and to explain that the United States had become sovereign in the Louisiana Territory. The expedition was to promote peace among warring tribes while laying the groundwork for the American fur trade. These goals proved to be elusive because the explorers did not understand the dynamics of tribal relations in the Missouri River region. Frequently Lewis and Clark believed that they had established a peace between warring tribes only to learn that they had really sowed the seeds of future enmity. For example, Lewis's announcement of the advent of the St. Louis-based fur trade alarmed the Blackfeet because American traders would arm potential enemies. Formerly the Blackfeet had been able to dominate the upper reaches of the Missouri with guns

from British traders. Under the circumstances, Lewis promoted neither peace nor trade as the Blackfeet preferred to fight to keep out unwanted American interlopers and preserve their place in the upper Missouri River region. Lewis and Clark established friendly relations with most tribes they encountered, however, even if they did not create a basis for intertribal peace. The Mandans welcomed the Corps of Discovery with trade, sexual liaisons, and general good fellowship in the winter of 1804. The Mandan and other plains tribes used sex as a way to establish trading relationships, to acquire the power that whites evidently possessed, and as part of their hospitality.

The winter of 1805 was not spent so amicably. The Americans found the Clatsops and their Columbia River neighbors physically unattractive and culturally more alien than the plainsmen with whom they were more familiar. Trapped by their own prejudices, Lewis and Clark were unable to comfortably adjust to the new cultural environment in the Pacific Northwest. They regarded the surrounding native people with deep suspicion, assuming that they would steal the Americans' supplies, or worse, if given the opportunity. Not surprisingly, these Indians seemed to have little respect for whites who extended scant courtesy to their native hosts. The Indians remained peaceable, but traded food and sexual favors to the explorers at high prices that were not mitigated by bonds of friendship and respect.

Everywhere Lewis and Clark went they seemed to be at a disadvantage when dealing with the Indians. They were always outtraded —especially when they bought horses—and they frequently misunderstood the cultural and historical context of their meetings with Indians. Native people, we may believe, more fully appreciated how Lewis and Clark fit into the scheme of Indian and white relations in western America. That is why the expedition's diplomatic goals were seldom achieved. In the rare instances where they were, peace and American trade fit into needs that natives had already perceived.

While Ronda is critical of the expedition's diplomatic efforts he gives Lewis and Clark good marks for their ethnographic work. Everywhere they went the explorers recorded Indian lifeways and material culture, thus providing a wealth of data for modern researchers. Ronda's book is thoughtfully conceived, nicely written, well reasoned, and altogether satisfying. It should be considered a model of ethnohistorical scholarship with the exception of its maps which are not adequate for a book of this quality. This criticism should in no way deter readers who will find *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* to be a valuable addition to the literature of Indian and white relations.

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